

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 067495

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, MASS, VS

SUBJECT: NOON PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 3

FOR AMBASSADOR

1. BELOW IS VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF THOSE PORTIONS OF THE
NOON PRESS BRIEFING TODAY RELATING TO VIE-NAM:

2. QUESTION. JOHN, DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT APPROVE OF
AMBASSADORS RECOMMENDING THAT U.S. SENATORS BE LIED TO
WHEN HE ASKS QUESTIONS ABOUT AMERICAN POLICY?

ANSWER. THOSE ARE PRETTY STRONG WORDS, KEN. BUT I THINK,
IN FAIRNESS -- I THINK I REALLY SHOULD POINT OUT TO YOU
THAT CONTRARY TO SOME OF THE STORIES I SAW THIS MORNING
WHICH SAID THAT THE AMBASSADOR WAS SAYING IN EFFECT WE
SHOULD NOT LAY THE FACTS BEFORE THE COMMITTEES, THE APPRO-
PRIATE COMMITTEES OF THE CONGRESS, THAT HE WAS REALLY
ARGUING THAT A SUBSTANTIVE REPLY TO THE QUESTIONS POSED BY
SENATOR KENNEDY COULD BE ARGUED -- OR ELABORATED, I SHOULD
SAY -- IN FULL BEFORE THE HOUSE AND SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AND FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEES, RESPECTIVELY. AND THAT,
I THINK, COMES THROUGH IN THE TELEGRAM.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 067495

3. QUESTION. WELL, IN THE TELEGRAM, I CAN UNDERSTAND A DEFENSE OF THE WITHHOLDING OF EVERY SINGLE DETAIL, IN THE INTERESTS OF TACTICAL MANEUVERABILITY. BUT HE SUGGESTED -- HE RECOMMENDED WITHHOLDING ANY DETAIL OR HONEST ANSWER. AND THIS WORD "HONEST" -- WHICH IS THE ONE THAT KEN RAISED -- IS THE HING I THINK THAT PEOPLE WOULD QUESTION MORE STRONGLY THAN THEY WOULD HOW FULSOME IT WAS. AND SO --.

ANSWER. I REALIZE THAT THE LANGUAGE APPEARING THERE DOES CAUSE A PROBLEM, BUT, AGAIN, JUST TO BE FAIR, THE AMBAS- SADOR WAS ARGUING THAT THE FULL PRESENTATION OF THE ADMIN- ISTRATION'S CASE FOR THE BUDGET FOR AID TO INDOCHINA WOULD BE LAID OUT IN FULL BEFORE THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES AND IN RATHER DUE COURSE. HE WAS NOT ARGUING, OBVIOUSLY, THAT THE CONGRESS SHOULD NOT BE TOLD --.

4. QUESTION. JOHN --.

ANSWER. -- WHAT OUR PLANS WERE. I WOULD TAKE HIS WORD.

5. QUESTION. -- HE WAS ARGUING THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT GIVE AN ELECTED MEMBER OF THE SENATE AN HONEST ANSWER.

ANSWER. I ACKNOWLEDGE THE PROBLEM.

6. QUESTION. ARE YOU SAYING IT'S MARTIN'S POSITION THAT KENNEDY IS NOT A RESPONSIBLE MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS AND, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE GIVEN THIS INFORMATION IN AN HONEST FASHION? HE'S IMPUGNING KENNEDY'S MOTIVES, I GATHER, THEN.

ANSWER. WELL, YOU DO HAVE THE TELEGRAM, AND IT'S ALL THERE.

7. QUESTION. ARE THERE ANY PLANS TO BRING AMBASSADOR MARTIN HOME FOR CONSULTATION?

ANSWER. NOT THAT I KNOW OF, NO. BUT LET ME REPEAT -- TO GO BACK TO KEN'S QUESTION HERE -- THAT THE AMBASSADOR WAS NOT ARGUING FOR DECEPTION OR OBFUSCATION OR MISLEADING UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 067495

THE CONGRESS AS A WHOLE. HIS ARGUMENT WAS -- I BELIEVE SOMEBODY USED THE WORD "TACTICAL" -- THAT WE WERE GOING TO BE PRESENTING OUR CASE ON THE BUDGET IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES. AND THAT SHOULD NOT BE LOST SIGHT OF BECAUSE OF THE WORDING OF THE TELE- GRAM.

8. QUESTION. THE WORD "HONEST" IS THE ONE THAT GIVES YOU

TROUBLE. YOU SAY IT CREATES A PROBLEM -- THE USE OF THE WORD "HONEST". WHO DOES IT CREATE A PROBLEM FOR?

ANSWER. WELL, THAT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS, I THINK.

9. QUESTION. JOHN, HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THE FACT THAT OF ALL THE AMBASSADORS AROUND THE WORLD, AMBASSADOR MARTIN MANAGES TO GET HIS CABLES ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE TIMES SO OFTEN?

ANSWER. WELL, YOU KNOW, WE HAVE TO DEPLORE -- WELL, IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE ONE OF MARCH 6TH --.

10. QUESTION. WELL, THIS WAS -- .

ANSWER. -- THAT WAS AN UNCLASSIFIED CABLE WHICH SET FORTH HIS FEELINGS IN SOME DETAIL -- AND WAS A PERSONAL THING, I GATHER. THE CABLE OF THE 21ST, WHICH WE'RE TALKING ABOUT TODAY, WAS HIS CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE TO THE DEPARTMENT. AND I REALLY CAN'T SAY MUCH MORE ABOUT IT THAN THAT.

11. QUESTION. ARE YOU TRYING TO FIND OUT HOW IT GOT UP TO THE HILL?

ANSWER. AM I?

12. QUESTION. IS THE BUILDING?

13. QUESTION. BY SPECIAL MESSENGER.

ANSWER. IF THE PRESS ACCOUNTS OF IT ARE IN THE RIGHT, I GATHER THAT THE COMMITTEE OR THE SENATOR'S OFFICE RECEIVED THE CABLE WITH THE TOP PRECEDENCE SNIPPED OFF AND WITH ONLY THE BODY OF THE -- WELL, THE TEXT OF THE MESSAGE ITSELF ENCLOSED. SO IT WOULD BE A LITTLE DIFFICULT, I THINK, TO FIND OUT WHO IS RESPONSIBLE.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 067495

14. QUESTION. JOHN -- .

ANSWER. TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, I DON'T KNOW THAT THERE IS ANY INVESTIGATION TO FIND OUT HOW THIS HAPPENED.

15. QUESTION. JOHN, HAS AMBASSADOR MARTIN BEEN CHASTIZED FOR USING THIS TYPE OF LANGUAGE, OR IS THIS KIND OF THING ENCOURAGED -- THAT KIND OF CANDOR -- TO RECOMMEND LYING TO A SENATOR?

ANSWER. NOW, COME ON, KEN. WE DON'T ENCOURAGE LACK OF CANDOR. I DON'T THINK THE PREMISE OF YOUR QUESTION IS FAIR. THE NEXT QUESTION -- RIGHT OVER HERE? (THE SPOKESMAN SUBSEQUENTLY SAID ON THE RECORD THAT IF THE IMPLICATION OF THIS QUESTIONING IS THE DEPARTMENT DOES NOT

CONTINUE TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN AMBASSADOR MARTIN, HE ASSERTS THAT AMBASSADOR MARTIN IS A CAREER MINISTER WHO HAS SERVED LONG AND WELL IN MANY DIFFICULT POSTS AND THAT, OF COURSE, HE CONTINUES TO HAVE THE DEPARTMENT'S CONFIDENCE.)

16. QUESTION. JOHN, I THINK YOU'VE BEEN ASKED ABOUT THIS. THE CABLE IMPUTES TO SENATOR KENNEDY'S STAFF A DESIRE TO AID HANOI. IS THIS A FAIRLY WIDELY HELD VIEW, WHEN PEOPLE ARE DEALING WITH VIET-NAM -- THE PEOPLE IN THE GOVERNMENT WHO ARE OPPOSED TO CONTINUING U.S. AID ARE OUT TO AID HANOI?

ANSWER. WE REFERRED HERE EARLIER TO THE CABLE OF MARCH 6TH, IN WHICH AMBASSADOR MARTIN SET FORTH HIS STRONGLY HELD VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT. THEY ARE HIS. AND I HAVE TO SAY ONLY THAT THE VIEWS HE EXPRESSED IN THE MARCH 21 CABLE ALSO ARE HIS VIEWS.

17. QUESTION. JOHN, DID DR. KISSINGER REPLY TO THE AMBASSADOR'S CABLE OF MARCH 21ST? AND, IF SO, WHAT DID HE SAY?

ANSWER. NOT TO MY KNOWLEDGE, NO. I TRIED TO CHECK THAT, BUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE IS THAT THE SECRETARY DECIDED THAT RATHER THAN ACCEPT THE AMBASSADOR'S RECOMMENDATION ABOUT A ROUTINE, NON-SUBSTANTIVE REPLY, THE SECRETARY, I'M SURE, NOTED THE RECOMMENDATION BUT DECIDED OTHERWISE.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 067495

AND, AS YOU KNOW, THERE IS THE -- WHAT IS IT, A 11- OR 13-PAGE LETTER -- WHICH WENT UP TO THE SENATOR ON THE 25TH.

18. QUESTION. WHAT WAS THE DATE OF THAT FIRST CABLE -- MARCH 6TH?

ANSWER. MARCH 6, I'M PRETTY SURE. AND THAT WAS UNCLASSIFIED, YOU KNOW, THE OTHER WAS NOT. RUSH

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